Resource Guide: Preparing Your Catalyst Fund Application and Selecting an EDI Consultant

Introduction
The League of American Orchestras has prepared this Resource Guide to support orchestra leaders who are considering applying to The Catalyst Fund. The Guide acknowledges that organizations that choose to focus on deepening their engagement with issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) arrive at that decision in myriad ways. The information provided in the Guide is not meant to be prescriptive but meant to be descriptive and suggest a structure for the work. Similarly, the League does not endorse any specific consultants, agencies, or working methods.

EDI is challenging work that can offer satisfying rewards. The work of strengthening institutions and structures using an EDI lens can be facilitated by adhering to the values of:

- **Humility:** acknowledging that answers can be elusive and uncomfortable, but maintaining a willingness to be open to and not judgmental of different views and perspectives
- **Transparency:** maintaining a willingness to engage in clear and candid communication in discussing both the successes and the challenges involved in becoming institutions that use more equitable systems and structures
- **Authenticity:** EDI is a sustained practice that eschews tokenism to embed equity across the institution. To do this requires alignment across different organizational functions, departments, and hierarchies.

Before You Begin
As a first step, consider any work related to EDI your orchestra has undertaken to date. Next, identify the challenges the institution faces to becoming more equitable and what kind of support—both internal and external—might be helpful to your progress.

- **Gain Consensus and Buy-In:** As with any major initiative, projects focusing on EDI must have buy-in from the board, executive leaders, and musicians. Gathering the input of these leaders while shaping your application to The Catalyst Fund will create a solid foundation for success whether you apply and receive a grant or continue other EDI work on your own.
- **Communicate the Commitment:** Before you begin drafting your application, connect with each leader to explain the commitment required for the success of the project. You’ll also need to gather their input and perspective to shape your proposal. In the spirit of approaching this work in community, it may be beneficial to engage with external community leaders to learn their perspective on the needs and desires of the communities you serve as well as to understand how your organization is perceived.
- **Gather the Right People:** It may be beneficial to appoint a committee or task force comprised of key internal stakeholders who can support the planning process and consultancy. This group should include leaders from the board, musicians, and executives, as previously mentioned, but prioritize gaining a broad range of perspectives. Model inclusive behavior from the start by engaging people with various seniority levels, from different administrative departments, and with different life experiences. Think of your staff, board, and musicians as thought partners who bring a depth of experiences to this work.
• **Take Stock of Where You Are:** It may be helpful to think of EDI as a journey and a continuum of practice. To figure out where your orchestra is on its EDI journey, map existing efforts, including:
  - Committee Activity, such as a task force or council that focuses on the work
  - Professional Development, such as taking part in workshops on bias and racism
  - Human Resources Development, including internal policies, hiring practices, and review structures that encourage equal opportunity for underrepresented communities (e.g., leave policies for fathers or for new adoptions, or elder care, etc.)
  - Programs, such as sensory-friendly programming, family and youth concerts, or programs featuring music and musicians from underrepresented communities
  - Strategic Planning, such as a commitment to EDI within the organization’s plan
  - Holistic and Integrated Approach, where your orchestra has developed structures, plans, and policies that are aligned with the orchestra’s overall mission and strategic imperatives. This includes an investment in and commitment to measuring progress

• **Think Beyond:** In addition to activities, policies, and programs, your orchestra might need to consider the following:
  - The extent to which staff and musicians from all backgrounds feel like they can bring their full selves to the organization
  - Any harassment or discrimination complaints or other grievances brought against the organization based on a staff member or musician’s feeling of discomfort or feeling threatened
  - The difficulty or ease of recruiting and retaining diverse talent in staff, musicians, or board members
  - Available forums to celebrate or discuss cultures, customs, or norms beyond those held by the dominant group (e.g., celebrating Lunar New Year, Hanukkah, or Eid; the price point of events and their location; musical genres represented and performed)

• **Understand and Articulate the “Why” of the Work:** Any EDI practice should be grounded in authenticity that is expressed by sustained approaches and tangible buy-in from leadership. Consider your Catalyst Fund application a step in an ongoing practice that continues beyond the grant period. Ask yourself:
  - Why do we want to do this now?
  - Why does pursuing efforts to advance EDI make our organization better?
  - What are the gaps in our organization?
  - What community members have we unconsciously overlooked?
  - Have our policies, programs, beliefs or structures made it easier for us to overlook certain community members? If so, which ones?
  - How will we address questions that arise from other musicians, staff, and board members about why we are prioritizing this work?
  - How will we communicate about the importance of this work internally AND externally?

Additional questions to assist your planning conversations around EDI can be found in Appendix B.
Mapping Next Steps

Step 1: Create the Request for Proposal (RFP)

An RFP is a document that describes the assistance you need for your project. It includes requirements designed to solicit interest from consultants who can offer the expertise you need. The RFP should provide enough context for your situation and a clear understanding of the scope of work required to complete the project. In addition, your RFP should include:

- Organizational Overview, Mission and History of the organization
- Rationale for why you are doing this work right now
- Scope of Work: What exactly you want the consultant to do, and the goals and objectives of the project
- Tasks and Deliverables: Are there documents, processes, or other tangible items you expect from the consultant? Are there other milestones you can identify?
- Accountability: Who will be the consultant’s primary contact during the project and what is the process for communication?
- Key dates, such as the period you are accepting proposals, when you will review them, and when you will invite candidates for interviews. Not only does this information help potential applicants plan, but it also helps staff and other stakeholders make plans to participate and be available during the vetting and selection process.
- How you will evaluate the strength and rigor of the proposal and consultant: Will you require additional information besides resumes, such as: references, a statement of philosophy and approach to EDI work, narrative biographies, etc.

Step 2: Identify Consultants

The League has compiled a list of known EDI consultants to support grantees of The Catalyst Fund and to assist the larger orchestra field in advancing its understanding and practice of EDI. In acknowledging that this list is not inclusive of the entirety of EDI expertise, the League does not endorse any specific consultant or entity for this work. Applicants who advance to provisional grantee status will receive this list to assist them in hiring an expert for their projects. Additional lists of EDI consultants and resources are available at the DEI Expert Hub and American for the Arts.

Whether you choose to use these lists or other resources, you may always choose how far you’d like to cast your net in the search. To make that decision, be sure to consider:

- **Geography**: Is it important that your consultant be on-site with you? Does your consultant understand how geography affects EDI issues in your community and cultural context? If may be helpful to see if a consultant specializes in a specific of the country or has offices near you.
- **Arts Experience**: Is it important to you that the consultant has worked with other orchestras? Other arts organizations? Other sectors? If the issues you wish to address are specific to
musical ensembles, having a consultant with this experience may be important to achieving your overall project goals.

- **Size:** This often is a consideration of cost but can also impact the approach. If you engage a consulting firm, you may only work with one or two people from the firm but may benefit from knowledge and expertise across the organization. Independent consultants, however, may be able to provide focused and specialized attention to your project since there aren't other people involved. Consider your preference and what might best serve your present need.

After compiling a list of consultants you’d like to learn more about, make sure you have the correct contact information and distribute your RFP to them. Give potential applicants at least four weeks to respond and follow up with them one week before the submission deadline to make sure your invitation was received.

**Step 3: Review Potential Candidates**

Once you have distributed your RFP but before you begin receiving proposals, set review criteria that will provide a measured and consistent way to evaluate the proposals. While you do not have to implement a scoring rubric, it would be beneficial to include the following criteria:

- **Proposed Approach:** What is the strength of their proposed approach? Is it innovative or distinctive from others in the pool?
- **Cultural Adaptability:** Is their approach orchestra-friendly? Would it be a good approach for my organization? Do they have a good understanding of my orchestra’s community and/or the context in which it operates?
- **Experience:** How deep is their overall experience? Arts experience?
- **Budget:** Have they presented a reasonable budget, and one that my organization can afford? How does this budget compare to others in the pool?

Once you begin to receive applications, be sure to:

- Circulate them to the selection group/committee for review, giving them about a week to respond
- If you receive more than five responses, it may be useful to gather the selection group/committee together to discuss the applications to narrow the potential candidates to three finalists to interview.

When you’ve selected your finalists, set up interviews.

- To expedite efficiency, you may wish to provide consultants with questions or concerns you want to discuss during their interview in advance. Typically, consultants or firms will provide a written response to those queries before the interview, allowing you more time to expand on those ideas or additional concerns in person.
- During the interview, ask the consultant anything that feels relevant to your understanding of their approach and process as well as what it would be like to work with them. Be sure you understand:
  - **Philosophy:** There are many approaches to and frameworks for addressing EDI issues such as a focus on anti-racism, anti-oppression, or intersectionality, among others.
  - **Deliverables:** What documents, trainings, assessments, etc. will you receive? When do you expect them and what does the consultant need from you to create or deliver them?
- **Process and Responsiveness**: What is the consultant’s working process? What are the expectations for communication and collaboration? How many other projects and clients will the consultant be working with while they work on your project?

- **Budget**: Are there any discrepancies? Do you understand all the costs outlined? Are there any expenses missing or ones you have questions about? Is your project contingent on receiving a Catalyst Fund grant or any other contributed or earned revenues? (If so, we recommend you be transparent about that with candidates.)

- **Cultural Adaptability**: Has the consultant worked with other orchestras or other arts organizations like museums or theater companies? Inquire about their understanding of the orchestra field’s challenges and opportunities for growth and impact. Ask them to discuss any challenges they anticipate when working with your organization.

Once you’ve applied the selection criteria and the support of the working group, your orchestra will be well equipped to choose a consultant who is right for you.
Appendix A: Sample Commitment Letter

DATE

Jesse Rosen
President & CEO
League of American Orchestras
33 West 60th Street
Floor 5
New York, NY 10023

Dear Members of the Grants Review Panel:

We write to confirm our commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across all areas of our orchestra. Our Catalyst Fund proposal is supported fully and enthusiastically by board members, administrative and artistic staff, and musicians. We consider this work an important step in our growth as an organization and in our ability to use music in service to our community.

We appreciate the support The Catalyst Fund provides as we learn with and from each other and share our experiences and perspectives. If selected for a grant, we look forward to contributing to and participating in The Catalyst Fund’s cohort activities and building lasting relationships with peers who are similarly committed to exemplifying EDI principles.

While we realize this project is only one step in an ongoing commitment to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our orchestra and more broadly in the larger orchestral field, we are excited by the potential it holds to push our understanding and practice of EDI to a higher level. After organizing a taskforce and working group, having staff, board, and musicians attend an anti-bias workshop series, and auditing our processes and practices for equity, we are confident this project will provide the foundation necessary to incorporate the practice of EDI throughout our orchestral culture.

We know we have much learning ahead well beyond the scope of this project, but we remain dedicated and hopeful. Our orchestra commits to active participation in this Catalyst Fund project and approaching the work with honesty, curiosity, and openness because we see it as a moral imperative—our contribution to making a more just world.

Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

President & CEO        Chair, Board of Directors        Music Director        Orchestra Personnel Manager
Appendix B: Resources

The following is a brief selection of resources that may be helpful as you search for an EDI consultant:

- The League’s online Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Center includes hundreds of resources
- Arts Consulting Group: The Three Sides of Organizational Diversity
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation: Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide
- National Council of Nonprofits: Why diversity, equity, and inclusion matter for nonprofits
- Equity Training Consultants List developed by Americans for the Arts
- The Anti-Oppression Network: What is anti-oppression?
Appendix C: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Work Sheet for Orchestras

This work sheet is intended as a resource that may be used to inform planning conversations within your orchestra.

Section one helps you to identify key steps that your organization may already have taken in its conversations and actions around EDI. Section two helps you to identify learning challenges your organization faces around EDI. And section three helps you to prioritize your needs in becoming a more equitable organization.

SECTION ONE: KEY STEPS TAKEN TO DATE

This section helps you to identify key steps that your organization may already have taken in its conversations and actions around EDI.

1. In the past three years, have you collected any of the following demographic information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conductor</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soloists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmed Composers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience (paid)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience (free)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider community beyond our current audiences</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Do you have an active DEI Committee/Council/Task Force of any type? (this could be a board or musician committee, a staff task force, a community partnership group, or any other type of regular convening focused on DEI discussions or work)

○ We have not considered forming a DEI committee of any type
○ We have considered, but not moved forward with, forming a DEI committee (of any type)
○ We formed a DEI committee (of any type), but it is no longer active
○ We formed a DEI committee (of any type), but its work is largely independent of that of our staff and / or board
○ We formed a DEI committee (of any type), and its work is integrated with that of our staff and / or board

3. Who serves/served on the committee? (check all that apply)

○ Board members
○ Community Partners
○ Conductors / Artistic Staff
○ Funders
○ Musicians
○ Staff
○ Volunteers
○ Other external stakeholders
○ Other

4. Do you have a formal DEI plan?

○ We have not considered creating a formal diversity, equity, and inclusion plan of any type
○ We have considered, but not moved forward, creating a formal diversity, equity, and inclusion plan
○ We have created a formal diversity, equity, and inclusion plan (of any type)
○ We created a formal diversity, equity, and inclusion plan, and re-assessing the plan is a regular, on-going part of our work
5. Are you working to align your organization's mission statement with its commitment to DEI?

- We don't have a mission statement
- We have not considered re-assessing our organization’s mission statement to determine alignment with an organizational commitment to DEI
- We have considered, but not moved forward on, re-assessing our organization’s mission statement, to determine alignment with an organizational commitment to DEI
- We have re-assessed our organization’s mission statement, to determine alignment with an organizational commitment to DEI
- Re-assessment of our organization’s mission statement for alignment with an organizational commitment on DEI is a regular, ongoing part of our work

6. Are you working to align your organization’s culture with its commitment to DEI?

- We have not considered inclusion, or how our organization’s culture could change in order to make it more inclusive
- We have considered inclusion, and how our organization’s culture could change in order to make it more inclusive
- We have defined inclusion, discussed best practices, and are making progress towards becoming more inclusive
- We have conducted an organizational culture assessment, as part of this work
- We have internalized an understanding of inclusion, and work to be mindful of inclusion in all our orchestra's decision-making
7. **Have you begun to consider or address the role played by unconscious bias in your organization’s work?**

- We have not discussed the role that unconscious bias might play in our organization
- We have recognized that unconscious bias influences our organization’s work, but have not yet taken any steps to address this
- We have recognized that unconscious bias influences our organization’s work, and have taken steps to learn how to manage it
- We have undertaken organizational bias training or consultancy
- Bias management practices are consistently applied across our organization

8. **Staff HR Policies and Practices:**

- We have not considered reviewing our staff HR (recruitment and retention) policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have considered, but not moved forward on, reviewing our HR policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have reviewed our staff HR policies and/or practices within the context of DEI

9. **Musician HR Policies and Practices:**

- We have not considered reviewing our musician HR (recruitment, audition and retention) policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have considered, but not moved forward on, reviewing our musician HR (recruitment, audition and retention) policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have reviewed our musician HR (recruitment, audition and retention) policies and/or practices within the context of DEI

10. **Artist and Repertoire Programming:**

- We have not considered reviewing our music programming policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have considered, but not moved forward on, reviewing our music programming policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have reviewed our music programming policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
- We have made changes to our music programming policies and/or practices within the context of DEI
11. Has your organization built connections to networks or organizations that help you to identify, cultivate, recruit, and retain ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American) individuals?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conductors / Music Director /</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artistic Directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soloists</td>
<td>O</td>
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</table>

12. Does your organization offer specific programs or processes to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace? Please select all that apply.

- Peer mentoring
- Musician fellowship program for one musician
- Musician fellowship program for more than one musician
- DEI considerations built into staff recruitment, orientation, and exit processes
- DEI considerations built into board recruitment, orientation, and exit processes?
- Other (please specify) _____________________________________________

13. Does your organization assess the outcomes of your DEI efforts and learning in any way?

- No
- To some extent
- Yes

14. Does your organization share the stories of your DEI efforts and learnings in any way?

- No
- To some extent
- Yes
### SECTION 2: CHALLENGES

(note: a score of 1 indicates that your organization is not at all challenged in this area; a score of 3 indicates that your organization is highly challenged in this area).

15. Please rate the following **learning challenges** your organization faces in the context of advancing its EDI conversations and actions:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of shared vocabulary and ability to talk about DEI topics</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of why DEI is important to the health of the organization</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about best practices and pitfalls in DEI work within the orchestra field</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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</table>

16. Please rate the following **resource challenges** your organization faces in the context of advancing its EDI conversations and actions:

(note: a score of 1 indicates that your organization is not at all challenged in this area; a score of 3 indicates that your organization is highly challenged in this area).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff time/resources</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of available financial resources/lack of fundraising opportunity</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of “head and heart space” (the mental and emotional space necessary to advance this work)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please rate the following engagement challenges your organization faces in the context of advancing its DEI conversations and actions:

*(note: a score of 1 indicates that your organization is not at all challenged in this area; a score of 5 indicates that your organization is highly challenged in this area)*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of leadership from CEO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of leadership from Board Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of board buy-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of musician buy-in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of staff buy-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of conductor/Music Director/Artistic Director buy-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited / lack of volunteer buy-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEI responsibility centered in one department, and not shared by the entire organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>A sense of fatigue around the topic of DEI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please rate the following challenges in implementing your organization’s DEI conversations and actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty translating intent into strategy- we don’t know how or where to start this work</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty translating strategy into action- we have a plan but we can’t execute it</td>
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<tr>
<td>The scope of our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of strong relationships with community organizations</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty fundraising for programmatic DEI work (e.g. commissions, programs to support ALAANA musicians)</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty fundraising for non-programmatic DEI work (e.g. partnership development, organizational learning and development)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty identifying appropriate external specialists to support and guide the process</td>
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<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What do you believe is most holding your orchestra back from DEI conversations and actions?
### SECTION 4: NEEDS

How helpful would external consultancy support be in the following areas? (note: a score of 1 indicates that your organization would not find this form of support helpful; a score of 3 indicates that your organization would find this form of support very helpful).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A “first steps in DEI” program, exploring the basics of DEI language and examples of how DEI work could apply to your orchestra</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating DEI topics (such as implicit bias training, anti-racism training, power and privilege etc.) to your organization.</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal assessment, DEI planning, and alignment of DEI work with the long-term strategic goals of your orchestra</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building momentum, setting expectations, and increasing the priority level around DEI work</td>
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<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building internal capacity for listening (i.e. training in how to start and sustain the DEI conversation within your orchestra)</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building greater capacity to create and sustain strong community relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building greater capacity to evaluate and learn from your organization’s current DEI programs</td>
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<td>◯</td>
<td>◯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a professional development pathway for future staff and board members of color</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching for staff and board leadership</td>
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